

Message Text

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20

ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20

USIA-15 ACDA-19 IO-14 SY-10 USSS-00 OMB-01 DRC-01

CU-04 AID-20 NEA-10 A-01 PER-05 EUR-25 OC-06 CCO-00

OPR-02 /210 W

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P R 200712Z OCT 73

FM AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5504

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L KUALA LUMPUR 4647

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, MY, US, IS, ASEC

SUBJECT: KL DEMONSTRATIONS AFTER ONE WEEK

REF: A) KL 4646

B) KL 4581

C) KL 4564

D) KL 4538

E) KL 4536

SUMMARY: SPORADIC ANTI-US DEMONSTRATIONS BY PRO-ARAB MALAY STUDENTS ANGERED BY US AID TO ISRAEL ESCALATED OVER PAST WEEK INTO DEMO INVOLVING CROWD OF OVER ONE THOUSAND AND CULMINATED IN BOMBING OF USIS CULTURAL CENTER OCT 19.

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THROUGHOUT DEMOS EMBASSY RECEIVED FULLEST COOPERATION FROM

OFFICIALLY PRO-ARAB GOM AND KUALA LUMPUR POLICE. STUDENT LEADERS MET WITH PRIME MINISTER AND HOME MINISTER LAST NIGHT WHERE THEY DENIED ANY CONNECTION WITH BOMBING AND ACKNOWLEDGED DANGER TO CIVIC PEACE OF FURTHER LARGE, UNCONTROLLED DEMOS. EMBASSY HAS OFFICIALLY REVIEWED SITUATION WITH FONMIN IN NOTE WHICH EXPRESSED OUR CONFIDENCE IN FURTHER COOPERATION BUT EMPHASIZED DANGER POSED BY FURTHER ESCALATION. GOM SEEMS TO HAVE SUCCESSFULLY COOLED SITUATION FOR TIME BEING BUT EMBASSY CONTINUES TO MAINTAIN HEIGHTENED SECURITY POSTURE. END SUMMARY.

1. AFTER ONE WEEK OF SPORADIC ANTI-AMERICAN, ANTI-ISRAELI DISTURBANCES BEGINNING WITH A TINY, ORDERLY DEMONSTRATION LASTING A HALF HOUR OCT 12, ESCALATING OCT 16 TO A FIVE HOUR SESSION INVOLVING OVER A THOUSAND CHANTING, MILITANT STUDENTS IN FRONT BOTH OF THE AIA BLDG. AND THE USIS LINCOLN CULTURAL CENTER, AND CULMINATING OCT 19 IN THE EARLY MORNING EXPLOSION OF A BOMB IN FRONT OF THE CENTER, THE EMBASSY PAUSES TO DRAW BREATH AND ASSESS THE EVENTS OF THE PAST SEVEN DAYS. IN DOING SO IT IS WELL TO BEGIN BY NOTING THAT MALAYSIA IS OFFICIALLY A MUSLIM COUNTRY IN WHICH THE RULING MALAY PARTY IS DEPENDENT ON SUPPORT OF LARGE NUMBERS OF DEVOUT AND UNSOPHISTICATED MUSLIM VILLAGERS, AS WELL AS MORE SOPHISTICATED BUT EQUALLY PRO-MUSLIM AND HENCE PRO-ARAB MALAY UNIVERISTY STUDENTS. MIDDLE EAST WAR PROVIDES AN ISSUE AROUND WHICH DIVERSE ELEMENTS CAN RALLY WITHOUT OFFENDING GOVERNMENT, AND GEOGRAPHICAL DISTANCE FROM SCENE OF CONFLICT OFFERS NO OTHER MANNR OF EXPRESSING SUPPORT OF LARGEST GROUP OF DEVOUT MUSLIMS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA. ON THE OTHER HAND, THE GOM IS ALSO FRIENDLY TO U.S. AND, SINCE DESTRUCTIVE RIOTS OF MAY 1969, IS EXTRA-ORDINARILY SENSITIVE TO POSSIBILITY OF SMALL CONFRONTATIONS EXPANDING INTO BLOODY RACIAL VIOLENCE.

2. PRESENT SITUATION IS FURTHER COMPLICATED BY ACTIVITIES OF A SMALL BUT WELL-ORGANIZED UNIVERSITY OF MALAYA SOCIALIST GROUP WHICH CONTROLS STUDENT COUNCIL; PRESENCE OF A FIERY, IF DISSOLUTE, RESIDENT AL FATAH REP AND HIS FOLLOWERS; RIVALRY BETWEEN UMNO YOUTH CHIEF AND SELANGOR CHIEF MINISTER DATUK HARUN IDRIS AND YOUNGER, REFORMIST MUSLIM LEADERS OF THE ANGKATAN BELIA ISLAM MALAYSIA AND THE MALAYSIAN YOUTH

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COUNCIL FOR THE LOYALTY OF YOUNG MALAYS; DESIRE OF MUSLIM WARD POLITICIANS TO MAINTAIN HARMONY WITH THEIR CONSTITUENTS BY GETTING ON THE ANTI-ISRAEL, ANTI-US BANDWAGON; AND, LAST BUT NOT LEAST, SOVIET-FUNDED MALAYSIAN BRANCH OF AAPSO WHICH INCLUDES SEVERAL WELL-KNOWN LOCAL INTELLECTUALS. COMBINE ALL THIS WITH FRUSTRATIONS GENERATED BY RESTRAINTS NORMALLY PLACED BY GOM ON POLITICAL ACTIVITIES, SHARPLY RISING COST OF LIVING, AND DRASTIC EXAMPLE OF STUDENT POWER IN BANGKOK AND

YOU HAVE A FAIRLY VOLATILE MIXTURE.

3. WHEN TEAR GAS WAS UNNECESSARILY USED AGAINST A SMALL (300-500) AND GENERALLY ORDERLY CROWD DEMONSTRATING IN FRONT OF EMBASSY OCT 12, IT WAS EASY FOR VARIOUS INTERESTED FACTIONS IN SCHOOLS IN KUALA LUMPUR AREA TO GENERATE RESENTMENT AGAINST AUTHORITIES AND THE U.S. WHICH RESULTED IN LARGE DEMO OCT 16. THE GOM, AWARE OF OVER REACTION BY POLICE ON OCT 12, WAS CAREFUL NOT TO EXERT UNNECESSARY PRESSURES ON OCT 16 DEMO AND WENT TO FAR AS TO SEND HOME AFFAIRS/INFORMATION MINISTER GHAZALI TO ATTEMPT TO DISPERSE CROWD AFTER WINDOWS WERE BROKEN AT THE USIS CENTER.

4. EXPLOSION OF BOMB AT USIS CENTER MORNING OF OCT 19 FURTHER CONVINCED GOVERNMENT TO LIMIT RISK OF VIOLENCE OR DAMAGE TO PROPERTY. THIS WAS ACCOMPLISHED THROUGH MEETING LAST NIGHT (OCT 19) BETWEEN STUDENT LEADERS AND GHAZALI SHAFIE AND HIS SENIOR SECURITY ADIES DURING WHICH DANGER OF LARGE SCALE CIVIC DISORDER WAS POINTED OUT AND ACKNOWLEDGED BY STUDENT LEADERS WHO ALSO VEHEMENTLY DENIED ANY CONNECTION WITH BOMBING. THIS MEETING WAS FOLLOWED BY ANOTHER WITH PRIME MINISTER RAZAK IN WHICH HE RECEIVED A PETITION FROM THE STUDENTS BUT AVOIDED DISCUSSION OF THE DISTURBANCES BY ELEVATING THE EXCHANGE TO THE LARGER ISSUES OF MALAYSIAN PROGRESS AND PROSPERITY. RELIABLE SOURCES REPORT THAT GOM SECURITY AUTHORITIES FEEL SITUATION HAS BEEN COOLED FOR TIME BEING BY THIS ACTION.

5. IN DEALING WITH GOM, EMBASSY HAS EXPRESSED ITS CONFIDENCE IN MEASURES TAKEN TO PROTECT LIVES AND PROPERTY AND HAS PRAISED COOPERATION OF POLICE. WE HAVE GONE ON RECORD, HOWEVER, REGARDING OUR FEAR THAT ANY CONTINUED ESCALATION WOULD PRESENT A DANGER TO LIVES AND PROPERTY (SEE REF A).

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YM COMMENT: DESPITE RESTRAINTS ON ITS ABILITY TO MANEUVER IN THIS SITUATION, GOM SEEMS TO HAVE ACTED SUCCESSFULLY IN CALMING STUDENTS FOR THE TIME BEING. ALTHOUGH WE CANNOT COMPLETELY RULE OUT RECURRENCE OF DEMONSTRATIONS, ISOLATED ACTS OF VIOLENCE OR ELIMINATE CONTINUED HARRASSMENT BY TELEPHONE, EMBASSY FEELS ON BALANCE THAT SITUATION IS UNDER CONTROL. EVENTS HERE, HOWEVER, COULD BE ALTERED BY DEVELOPMENTS ELSEWHERE (E.G., IN MIDDLE EAST) AND THEREFORE HEIGHTENED SECURITY PRECATUIONS AND CLOSE CONTACT WITH GOM AND LOCAL AMERICAN COMMUNITY ARE BEING CONTINUED.

LYDMAN

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